

THE

BLACK LENS

SPOKANE

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NEWS FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

“THEY ALMOST GOT AWAY WITH IT”

All Three Men Convicted of Ahmaud Arbery’s Murder

By Char Adams

(Reprinted from NBC BLK, nbcnews.com/nbcblk)

Nearly two years before a jury convicted three white men in the shooting death of Ahmaud Arbery, authorities had said there was no need to arrest them.

On Wednesday, November 24, an almost all-white jury (11 white, 1 Black) found Travis McMichael, his father, Gregory McMichael, and neighbor William “Roddie” Bryan guilty in the murder of Arbery in Georgia. But the three might never have been indicted in the first place had it not been for a leaked video that prompted calls for attention to his death.

“I don’t want to be a spoilsport, but what if that video had not come out several months later?” Michael Irvin, a teacher from the Orlando, Florida, area told NBC News outside the courthouse Wednesday. “A young Black man would have been taken from his family and community with no one held responsible. That part, I can’t ignore. So, I’m happy justice was served.”

The McMichaels and Bryan were not arrested until months after they chased Arbery in a pickup truck in Satilla Shores, their neighborhood near Brunswick, on Feb. 23, 2020. Travis McMichael shot Arbery, a 25-year-old Black man, with a shotgun at close range. Bryan filmed the fatal encounter on his cellphone. Only after video footage of the fatal shooting leaked online May 5, 2020, did authorities arrest the trio on felony murder charges.

In the video, Arbery jogs down a road as a white pickup truck blocks his path. He is shown running around the vehicle, and a shot is fired. Then, Arbery and another man appear to scuffle and two more shots are fired.

After the verdict, social media platforms lit up with comments from users who said the case wouldn’t have gone to trial at all if the video hadn’t thrust the case into the national spotlight and sparked an outcry.

“They almost got away with it,” one social media user tweeted. “It’s devastating that these guilty verdicts feel like a miracle.”

Another person tweeted, “I’m happy Ahmaud Arbery’s killers are cooked. But never forget that this is not an example of the justice system working. Police didn’t arrest these men. Prosecutors didn’t want them charged. The video wasn’t released initially. It took outrage and pressure to make this happen.”



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The defense had argued that the men thought Arbery was a burglar and were attempting to make a citizen’s arrest and they acted in self-defense. However, Travis McMichael admitted during the trial that Arbery hadn’t shown a weapon or threatened him or spoken to him at all before he shot him.

Travis McMichael was convicted of malice murder, felony murder, aggravated assault, false imprisonment and criminal attempt to commit a felony. Gregory McMichael and William Bryan were found not guilty of the malice murder charge. All three face up to life in prison.

News of the killing largely remained under wraps in the weeks that followed. Arbery’s mother, Wanda Cooper-Jones, accused Glynn County, Georgia, police and two local prosecutors of conspiring to cover up Arbery’s murder and protect the men involved in his death.

A \$1 million lawsuit filed earlier this year alleges that the police department and officials with the Brunswick County District Attorney’s Office worked together to paint Arbery as a violent criminal and absolve the McMichaels and Bryan of wrongdoing. The lawsuit has been stalled amid the trial.

Just days after the shooting, Jackie Johnson, the Brunswick-area district attorney, recused herself from the case because she had worked with Gregory McMichael, a former Glynn County police officer, for decades. George Barnhill briefly took over the case. He soon recused himself but defended the actions of the McMichaels and Bryan, advising police that “he did not see grounds for the arrest of any of the individuals involved in Mr. Arbery’s death.”

Now, in a statement following the verdict, Arbery’s mother Cooper-Jones admitted that she never believed she’d see the men convicted.

“It’s been a long fight. It’s been a hard fight, but God is good,” she told reporters after the verdict. “To tell you the truth, I never saw this day back in 2020. I never thought this day would come.”



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ON MY MIND

THOUGHTS FROM THE EDITOR

By Sandra Williams

Goodbye 2021

The Good. The Bad.
And the Ugly.

This time of year, as the year winds its way down to a close, like many others, I take a little bit of time to look back over my shoulder and reflect on the past year.

I remember what I was thinking this time last year, I couldn't wait for 2020 to be over. I was so hoping that with the flip of a page on my calendar that maybe we could begin to put COVID-19 in the rear view mirror. But that has not happened. We keep getting teased that we might be close, but then we're not.

Even so, 2021, for me at least, has been so much better than 2020. I know that's not the case for everyone and I am aware of that, but for me, I've seen glimmers of light at the end of the tunnel.

So, let's start with the good. Those that I love most in the world have not been touched by COVID-19. We are healthy. So many people, some that I know, and many more that I do not know, did not make it through the year unscathed. But as for me and mine, we are good, and for that I am truly thankful.

I am also thankful that The Black Lens is thriving, which is no small thing. Thanks to a community of dedicated supporters that have rallied around this paper at a time when print publications are struggling and dying, the Black Lens is anything but struggling and nowhere near dying. I will be celebrating 7 years next month. A huge thank you for that!

And how can I not mention the Carl Maxey Center. In 2021, what was once an idea in my mind became a reality. I think when I saw the windows go up on



the building, more than anything else, it did something powerful for my spirit. It felt like hope at a time in 2021 when hope seemed to be in such short supply. Every time I drive by the building I feel that same way. Hopeful. And with hope, you can make it through anything.

There has unfortunately been some bad and ugly in 2021 as well. I have been heartsick from time to time wondering what in the hell happened to us as a people. We (too many of us) have become so incredibly selfish and self-centered. All that matters is defending our position. And defending our position has become more important than life itself, in some instances. It's like COVID-19 didn't just infect us and make us sick, it has in some ways stolen our humanity.

2021 has been a roller coaster. You have Kyle Rittenhouse cleared of all charges by an almost all-white jury on one day, and then a few days later, the three men who chased and killed Ahmaud Arbery were all found guilty of murder by an almost all-white jury as well. This year has been like that. One day up, the next day down. One week hopeful. The next week frustrated and angry.

But I was able to spend my Saturday evening watching the eyes of little Black and white children light up when they saw a Black Santa Clause in downtown Spokane. So, there's hope for 2022.

A Note to Black Lens Subscribers

The Black Lens will be taking a 1 year break from publishing. The January 2022 issue will be the last printed newspaper until 2023. The subscription software will allow me to freeze everyone's subscription right where it is. So, however many issues you have remaining on your subscription after the January 2022 issue, you will have the same number of issues remaining on your subscription once the paper starts back up. You don't have to do anything. If you would prefer a refund, feel free to let me know by sending me an e-mail at sandy@blacklensnews.com. Thank you.

THE BLACK LENS NEWS

The Black Lens is a community newspaper based in Spokane, WA. The paper is published on the first of each month, and it is focused on the news, events, issues, people and information important to Spokane's African American Community and beyond.

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Quote of the Month

“Turning Ahmaud Arbery into a victim after the choices that he made does not reflect the reality of what brought Ahmaud Arbery to Satilla Shores in his khaki shorts with no socks to cover his long, dirty toenails.”

-Laura Hogue

Defense Attorney for Gregory McMichael in her closing statement. McMichael was convicted of Murdering Ahmaud Arbery on November 24.

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Jackie Robinson, first African American to be signed up by a Major League baseball team, is shown in post-swing position in front of the stands. Robinson changed uniforms after playing with Montreal in an exhibition game against the Dodgers. (Getty Images)

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The script requires thirteen actors, 6 Black and 7 White (9M, 4W).

Those interested in reading the script or finding out more information in advance of auditions should contact Spokane Civic Theatre at the link below, or by calling Adell McAlpine Whitehead at 509-499-9462.

Join us in commemorating this iconic moment in this country’s civil rights movement.

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YOU SHOULD KNOW

(Or Things You Probably Didn't Learn In School)

ART AND HISTORY by Bertoni Jones Bey

The Doctrine of Discovery

On the pop quiz at school we were asked – Who “discovered” America? For a good grade we answered Christopher Columbus. But Columbus couldn’t have “discovered” a land already occupied.

Where does this claim of “discovery” come from? Columbus didn’t find anything new as humans go, but his discovery of America for Spain refers to a religious doctrine called The Doctrine of Discovery.

The Doctrine of Discovery was part of the “Inter Caetera”, a papal bull, or religious edict issued by Pope Alexander VI May 4, 1493. In it the pope commands Spain and Portugal to quit fighting each other and agree to exclusive rights to the “New World” along boundary lines (See Treaty of Tordesillas). The Doctrine of Discovery declared that lands not inhabited by “Christians” could be “discovered”, claimed by ownership, then exploited by Christians Nations only.

If you were Christian then your lands on European maps were considered “populated” and “inhabited”, and therefore off-limits. If, however, you were not Christian then those lands were declared “unpopulated”, “uninhabited”, and therefore fair game.

Pope Alexander VI declared – “the Catholic faith and the Christian religion be exalted and be everywhere increased and spread, that the health of souls be cared for and that barbarous nations be overthrown and brought to the faith itself.”



That language is very important – like the term “savage foe” on the Monaghan Statue in downtown Spokane.

This is not simple slander. The terms “heathen-nation,” “savage,” “barbarian” etc. were religious-political designations of status. Once these titles were attached Europeans were then free to violate the people and their own Bible.

If Europeans could call you heathen, then they had the right to treat you heathenly. If they could label you savage, then they had the right to treat you savagely.

By 1823 the Doctrine of Discovery became permanently woven into government policy in the first of three Supreme Court Indian cases.

In the case Johnson v. McIntosh, Chief Justice John Marshall declared that “The Indians were admitted to be the rightful occupants of the soil, with a legal as well as just claim to retain possession of it, and to use it according to their own discretion; but their rights to complete sovereignty, as independent nations, were necessarily diminished, and . . . Discovery gave exclusive title to those who made it. Discovery is the foundation of title, in European nations, and this overlooks all proprietary rights in the natives. Even if it should be admitted that the Indians were originally an independent people, they have ceased to be so. A nation that has passed under the domin-

ion of another, is no longer a sovereign state.”

By invoking discovery Justice Marshall did two things. First, he locked the door on indigenous peoples by stripping them of their status and natural rights in their own home. Second, and more devastating, he fused ecclesiastical, religious law with secular Constitutional law, obliterating separation of church and state.

That same year James Madison wrote: “Religion is not in the purview of human government. Religion is essentially distinct from civil government and exempt from its cognizance; a connection between them is injurious to both.”

The Doctrine of Discovery was a foundational doctrine for subjugation of indigenous peoples on the planet Earth, and the basis for current U.S. Indian policy. The tragic reality in this Age of Discovery is the genocide, destruction, and theft indigenous people suffered was in fact masterminded, ordained, and executed by complicit European Nations in collusion with Europe’s religious institutions.

Everything our indigenous ancestors suffered in this country was commanded by the European Church, the same church that reminds us in the scriptures – “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s property.”

Sources:
Inter Caetera (Doctrine of Discovery) – Issued by Pope Alexander VI May 4, 1493.
Johnson v. M’Intosh, 21 U.S. 543, 5 L.Ed. 681, 8 Wheat. 543 (1832)
Five Hundred Years of Injustice: The Legacy of Fifteenth Century Religious Prejudice – Steve Newcomb.
Ten Commandments (KJV) – Exodus 20:17.
Treaty of Tordesillas – June 7, 1494.



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The best time to think, talk about, and create advance directives is now; this is not something just for people who are sick. An advance directive needs to be done in advance of illness or injury that prevents you from understanding or

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We cannot know what the future holds for us, except that none of us will live forever. Your advance directive will be part of your legacy, providing clarity for your family and keeping the power and choice about your life and healthcare in your own hands.

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BLACK NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

Local, State, National and Around the World

Besty Wilkerson Retains Seat on Spokane City Council Holds Inauguration at Bethel AME Church on Nov 21

Spokane City Councilwoman Besty Wilkerson retained her seat on Tuesday, November 2.

“Every week of this campaign has made me more and more grateful for my friends, family, and supporters here in this incredible city,” Wilkerson said. “The enthusiasm behind our campaign, even when it was just me on the ballot, was palpable.”

Wilkerson, who was appointed to the Spokane City Council in front of a standing room only crowd on January 13, 2019, is the first African American to serve on Spokane’s City Council in two decades. She received 15,574 votes in the 2021 general election.

“Each vote is an affirmation of our shared values of collaboration, trust, and respect,” Wilkerson continued, “And each vote is a mandate to finish the work we have started together.”

Wilkerson grew up in Spokane and has strong family roots in District 2, which includes Spokane’s East Central neighborhood. Her mother was a minister and co-founded the Mt. Zion Holiness Church. She has raised two children in Spokane and is the proud grandmother of triplets, who were her inspiration for originally seeking office. Wilkerson is only the second African American woman to serve as a Council Member in Spokane’s 147 year history.

“To be honest, I never thought I’d be here — elected for the first time in this incred-



ible city,” Wilkerson shared. “When my single mom moved her four kids from Westpoint, Mississippi to Spokane in 1963, I think it’s safe to say she didn’t expect this either. But that’s the beauty of Spokane — this City of Promise that made my family’s story possible.”

Councilmember Wilkerson held her inauguration on Sunday, November 21, at her home church, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal, during the Sunday morning service. The service was presided over by Pastor, Benjamin D. Watson, Sr. and Wilkerson was sworn in by Judge George B. Fearing, who serves on the Washington Court of Appeals. She was also joined by her grandchildren.



Washington Supreme Court Judge Helen Whitener to Receive American Bar Association Stonewall Award

(Source: American Bar Association, americanbar.org)

The American Bar Association Commission on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) will honor Washington State Supreme Court Justice G. Helen Whitener with its Stonewall Award during a ceremony on Feb. 12, 2022, at 5:30 p.m. PST at the ABA Midyear Meeting in Seattle.

Named after the New York City Stonewall Inn police raid and riot of June 28, 1969, which was a turning point in the gay rights movement, the award recognizes lawyers who have considerably advanced lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals in the legal profession and successfully championed LGBT legal causes.

Whitener was appointed to the Washington State Supreme Court in April 2020 and was elected by the voters to retain her position in November 2020. Prior to that, Whitener served as a judge on the Pierce County Superior Court and the Washington State Board of Industrial Insurance Appeals, and as a pro-tem judge in Pierce County District Court and the City of Tacoma Municipal Court.

Before becoming a judge, Whitener litigated civil and criminal cases for 14 years, first as a prosecutor and defense attorney and later as a managing partner of the law firm of Whitener Rainey Writt PS in Tacoma. She is well recognized by the legal community for her commitment to justice and equity.

In January, Whitener received the Western Region of the National Black Law Students Association Judge of the



Year Award. The 400 Years of African American History Commission has also honored Whitener, naming her a 2020 Distinguished 400 Awardee. She is the former co-chair of the Washington State Minority and Justice Commission.

Whitener serves on the board of the International Association of LGBT Judges as well as on the Washington State Office of Civil Legal Aid Oversight Committee.

Whitener, who received her J.D. from Seattle University School of Law, is the first Black woman to serve on the Washington Supreme Court, the fourth immigrant-born justice and the first Black LGBT judge in the State of Washington.

“We are thrilled to honor Justice Helen Whitener, who even after being elevated to a higher judicial office continues to share her experience to raise awareness for matters of race, justice and equity and be a voice for many marginalized communities so that we can have a justice system that works for all,” said Judge Benes Aldana, chair of SOGI.

The ABA Commission on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity leads the ABA’s commitment to diversity, inclusion and full and equal participation by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in the ABA, the legal profession and society. Created in 2007, the commission seeks to secure equal treatment in the ABA, the legal profession and the justice system without regard to sexual orientation or gender identity.

The ABA is the largest voluntary association of lawyers in the world. As the national voice of the legal profession, the ABA works to improve the administration of justice, promotes programs that assist lawyers and judges in their work, accredits law schools, provides continuing legal education, and works to build public understanding around the world of the importance of the rule of law.

For more information on the American Bar Association visit: americanbar.org.

BLACK NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

Local, State, National and Around the World

NASA Astronaut Jessica Watkins Will Become the First Black Woman To Board the International Space Station



(Source: *Brian Good, diversityinc.com*)

Jessica Watkins is set to make history next year. When NASA’s Crew-4 mission launches in 2022, she will become one of a handful of Black astronauts ever to circle the planet and the first Black woman ever to join the International Space Station crew to live and work onboard the floating outpost.

Denise Chow of NBC News reported that NASA “announced on Tuesday, Nov. 16, that Watkins will fly to the space station in April 2022, alongside NASA astronauts Kjell Lindgren and Robert Hines and astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti of the European Space Agency.”

According to Chow, “they are slated to launch aboard SpaceX’s Crew Dragon capsule from NASA’s Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida. The mission, known as Crew-4, is expected to last six months.”

Watkins began her career as a geologist with an undergraduate degree from Stanford University and a doctorate from the University of California, Los Angeles. She will serve as a “mission specialist” on the Crew-4 flight, which will be her first trip into space.

“Last year, Watkins was chosen to join a select group of NASA astronauts leading the agency’s multi-billion-dollar Artemis program, which aims to return humans to the moon,” Chow reported. “As part of the initiative, NASA is expected to land the first woman and the first person of color on the lunar surface by 2025.”

In a video she recorded with NASA last year, prior to being selected for her April flight, Watkins spoke about her dreams of one day making it into space.

“A dream feels like a big, faraway goal that is going to be difficult to achieve, and something that



NASA astronaut and SpaceX Crew-4 Mission Specialist Jessica Watkins trains for a spacewalk at the Johnson Space Center’s Neutral Buoyancy Laboratory in Houston, Texas. Watkins is scheduled to launch to the International Space Station in April 2022 to begin a six-month research mission with fellow astronauts Kjell Lindgren and Robert Hines of NASA, and ESA (European Space Agency) astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti. (Photos Courtesy NASA)

you might achieve much later in life,” Watkins said. “But in reality, what a dream is — or a dream realized is — is just putting one foot in front of the other on a daily basis. And if you put enough of those footprints together, eventually they become a path towards your dreams.”

In 2020, Victor Glover became the first Black astronaut to participate in a long-term mission on the International Space Station.

For more information about Jessica Watkins visit: <https://www.nasa.gov/content/astronaut-jessica-watkins>

\$15 Million Settlement in Death of Elijah McClain

(Source: Jonathan Franklin, NPR, npr.org)

In November, the city of Aurora, Colorado agreed to pay \$15 million to the family of 23-year-old Elijah McClain, a Black man who died after being stopped by police.

“The city of Aurora and the family of Elijah McClain reached a settlement agreement in principle over the summer to resolve the lawsuit filed after his tragic death in August 2019,” said Ryan Luby, deputy director of communications for the city of Aurora in a statement sent to NPR.

Legal representatives for Elijah McClain’s mother, Sheneen McClain, told local TV station CBS4 Denver in a statement that she is thankful for the community and its “incredible support, love and commitment” to ensure Elijah McClain’s death would lead to meaningful reform.

“While nothing will fill that void, Ms. McClain is hopeful that badly needed reforms to the Aurora Police Department will spare other parents the same heartache,” the statement continues.

On Aug. 24, 2019, Elijah McClain, a massage therapist who played music for cats and dogs at a local animal shelter and not suspected of any crime, was confronted by police while walking home with an iced tea he had just bought from a convenience store. A caller told a 911 operator they had seen a “suspicious person wearing a mask and waving his hands.” Police claimed that McClain “resisted contact”. They tackled him to the ground, put him in a choke hold, ignored him as he cried out, pleaded and vomited, then called paramedics who injected him with ketamine, a powerful sedative. McClain suffered cardiac arrest and died six days later.



McClain’s cause of death was listed as “undetermined” by the coroner.

McClain’s parents filed a federal civil rights lawsuit in August 2020 against Aurora, as well as numerous police officers, a paramedic and the medical director of Aurora Fire Rescue, alleging there was no reason for McClain to be given ketamine and that the dose was too large for his body weight.

The District Attorney at the time refused to charge the officers, but two years after McClain’s death, a state grand jury filed 32 criminal charges against five men — Aurora police officers Nathan Woodyard and Randy Roedema, former officer Jason Rosenblatt, and paramedics Jeremy Cooper and Peter Cichuniec. The charges included manslaughter, assault and criminally negligent homicide. The men are expected to appear before a judge in January for arraignment.

A civil rights investigation prompted by McClain’s death found a pattern of racially biased policing in Aurora.

United Airlines Partnering With HBCUs To Train Pilots

(Source: Tommy G. Meade Jr, blavity.com)

United Airlines is launching a partnership with three historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs): Hampton University, Elizabeth City State University and Delaware State University. The partnership aims to identify top talent from the HBCUs and recruit students to United’s flight school.

In April, United, which is the only major U.S. airline to own a pilot training academy, announced plans to have 50% of its training school students be women and people of color.

“Being that I graduated from an HBCU, I’m very excited that United now has a partnership,” Gabrielle Harding, a United Airlines pilot, told the Virginia-Pilot. Harding graduated from Hampton’s aviation program.

“When you have the opportunity to see someone who’s in a career field that looks like you, then it’s always in the back of your mind that this is possible,” she said.



According to United, the program promises to give aspiring aviators the most direct path. Through the partnership, students will have the opportunity to participate, fly and associate with dedicated ambassadors and coaches who will help lead them on the path to a United flight deck. The future pilots must meet a minimum requirement of 24 months and 2,000 hours of training.

“Over the next decade, United will train 5,000 pilots who will be guaranteed a job with United, after they complete the requirements of the Aviate program – and our plan is for half of them to be women and people of color,” United CEO Scott Kirby said.

BLACK NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

Local, State, National and Around the World

Families of Charleston Church Massacre Reach \$88 Million Settlement with DOJ

(Source: [goodblacknews.org](#))

The U.S. Department of Justice announced in October it had reached an agreement to settle the civil cases arising out of the June 2015 Mother Emanuel AME Church mass shooting in Charleston, South Carolina.

Nine people were killed when 21-year-old white supremacist Dylann Roof entered Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church during Bible study and began shooting the congregants. He later confessed, saying he acted in hopes of igniting a race war.

Plaintiffs agreed to settle claims that the FBI was negligent when it failed to prohibit the sale of a gun by a licensed firearms dealer to Roof, a self-proclaimed white supremacist, who specifically targeted the 200-year-old historically African-American congregation.

The settlement provides \$63 million for families of those killed in the shooting rampage and \$25 million for survivors, according to lawyers involved in the agreement. For those killed in the shooting, the settlements range from \$6 million to \$7.5 million per claimant. For the survivors, the settlements are for \$5 million per claimant.

The parties have been in litigation since 2016, including before the district court and the federal court of appeals.

“The mass shooting at Mother Emanuel AME Church was a horrific hate crime that caused immeasurable suffering for



the families of the victims and the survivors,” said Attorney General Merrick B. Garland. “Since the day of the shooting, the Justice Department has sought to bring justice to the community, first by a successful hate crime prosecution and today by settling civil claims.”

On June 17, 2015, Mother Emanuel congregants welcomed a stranger who had entered their church. They invited him to participate in their Wednesday night bible study.

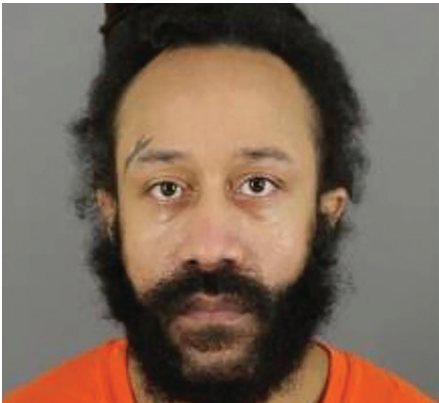
Tragically, at the close of the bible study, Roof shot and killed Cynthia Hurd, Susie Jackson, Tywanza Sanders, Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Daniel L. Simmons, Ethel Lee Lance, Myra Thompson, Rev. Depayne Middleton-Doctor and Mother Emanuel’s pastor, Reverend Clementa Pinckney, also a South Carolina State Senator.

The families of the Emanuel Nine, as well as the five survivors who were inside the church at the time of the shooting, sued the government. They sought to recover for wrongful death and physical injuries arising from the shooting.

Plaintiffs asserted that the FBI’s National Instant Criminal Background Checks System (NICS) failed to timely discover that the shooter was a person prohibited by federal law from possessing a firearm. Plaintiffs alleged that because of this delay, the shooter was able to purchase the handgun that he used to commit the atrocity.

The families sued after the FBI revealed that its system for conducting background checks failed to catch a fact that should have blocked the sale of the gun Roof used in the shooting. He bought the Glock 41 two months earlier at a shopping mall in West Columbia.

Police identify Waukesha Christmas parade suspect as Darrell Brooks Jr.



WAUKESHA, Wis. (AP) — The SUV driver who plowed into a Christmas parade in suburban Milwaukee on Sunday afternoon, November 21, killing at least six people and injuring 48, was leaving the scene of a domestic dispute that had taken place just minutes earlier, Waukesha’s police chief said Monday.

Darrell Brooks Jr., 39, of Milwaukee, had left the site of the domestic disturbance before officers arrived, and was not being chased by police at the time of the crash, according to the chief, who gave no further details on the dispute.

Brooks had been charged with crimes 16 times since 1999 and had two outstanding cases against him— including one in which he was accused of deliberately running down a woman with his vehicle.

Police said they were drawing up five charges of intentional homicide against Brooks.

Kevin Strickland Exonerated After 43 Years

(Source: [Chauncey Alcorn, thegriot.com](#); [Zoe Christen Jones, cbsnews.com](#))

Kevin Strickland had his 50-years-to-life prison sentence for a triple homicide set aside by a Missouri judge on November 23 after evidence presented by attorneys with the Kansas City-based Midwest Innocence Project proved he didn’t commit the crime.

In May, the Jackson County Prosecutor’s office in Independence, Missouri agreed to support Strickland’s exoneration after reviewing the new evidence uncovered by his lawyers. Retired Missouri Judge James Welsh ordered the 62-year-old, who had spent 43 years in prison, to be immediately released.

In 1979, Strickland was convicted of one count of capital murder and two counts of second degree murder for the April 25, 1978 shooting deaths of three people, Larry Ingram, 21, John Walker, 20, and Sherrie Black, 22, according to KSHB-TV. The late Cynthia Douglas, a fourth victim and the only person to survive the shooting before dying decades later in 2015, had testified in 1978 that Strickland was at the scene of the triple murder after investigators suggested to her that Strickland’s hair matched her description of the shooter’s, the outlet reported.

Strickland’s first trial ended with a hung jury, but a second jury trial in 1979 found him guilty of one count of capital murder and two counts of second-degree murder. He was sentenced to life without parole.

But Cynthia Douglas, who admitted drinking cognac and using marijuana the night of the murders, recanted her story in 2009 after learning Vincent Bell and Kilm Adkins confessed to the crime and testified that Strickland wasn’t involved. Bell pleaded guilty to three



Kevin Strickland leaves the Western Missouri Correctional Center in Cameron, Missouri, hours after a judge overturned his 1979 conviction. Photo: Carlos Moreno, KCUR counts of second-degree murder for his role in the murders and named two other accomplices who were never arrested.

Strickland’s fingerprints didn’t match the ones found on the murder weapon in 2020, when the Kansas City Police Department and the Jackson County Prosecutor’s office conducted an analysis.

Strickland’s 43 years behind bars was the longest wrongful imprisonment in Missouri history, according to The National Registry of Exonerations and CNN. He told CNN he was “still in disbelief” after being released. “I didn’t think this day would come.”

Since Strickland was not exonerated through DNA evidence, he was not eligible for compensation from the state of Missouri, so Innocence Project attorney Tricia Rojo Bushnell created a GoFundMe page for him in June to help him find a home and pay for his daily needs. More than 23,000 people donated to the fund, raising more than one million dollars to date.

Parents File \$150 Million Lawsuit Against Detroit School District

(Source: [Corey Williams, apnews.com](#); [bet.com](#))

The parents of a Black student have filed a \$150 million lawsuit against a suburban Detroit school district over allegations of death threats and racial discrimination against their daughter and other Black students. The lawsuit also names the superintendent Patrick Watson and high school principal Charlie Hollerith for failing to address multiple instances of alleged racial discrimination.

Evidence of discrimination listed in the lawsuit include a photo showing a red-lipped, black babydoll with a noose around its neck, dangling down from the school’s second floor. Another photo displays racist writings on a wall, with one message reading “kill all n***as” and another reading “all the n***as should be extinguished.”

The federal lawsuit filed Thursday, November 18, in Detroit by Cedric McCarrall and Carmen Davidson-McCarrall also alleges that officials at Bloomfield Hills High School said a white teacher’s decision to place a noose around the neck of a Black doll and drop it over a railing was a science project.

The lawsuit, which seeks class-action status, followed a walkout by students at the mostly white school north of Detroit protesting its response to racist messages on walls and on social media. As recently as November 18th, someone wrote a slur on a restroom wall, Cedric McCarrall told reporters.

“You cannot take what has been displayed at that school ... as anything other than death threats, and these are threats to kill and eliminate African Americans,” said Leonard Mungo, who filed the lawsuit on behalf of the McCarralls.

The McCarrall’s daughter attended the high school virtually last year due to the coronavirus pandemic, but this year is in-person.

“How can you study, how can you take tests, how can you go about your day as a child, as a student when you have someone up there saying they want you dead?” her father said Friday. “When I close my eyes I’m hearing what my parents and what my grandparents went through in the Jim Crow South.”

AFRICA NEWS

News Highlights From and About the Continent of Africa

South African Scientists Identify New COVID-19 Variant

(Source: Maria Cheng, apnews.com)

LONDON (AP) - South African scientists identified a new version of the coronavirus in November that they say is behind a recent spike in COVID-19 infections in Gauteng, the country's most populous province.

It's unclear where the new variant first emerged, but scientists in South Africa first alerted the World Health Organization and it has now been seen in travelers to Belgium, Botswana, Hong Kong and Israel.

Health Minister Joe Phaahla said the variant was linked to an "exponential rise" of cases in the last few days, although experts are still trying to determine if the new variant is actually responsible.

From just over 200 new confirmed cases per day in recent weeks, South Africa saw the number of new daily cases rocket to 2,465. Struggling to explain the sudden rise in cases, scientists studied virus samples from the outbreak and discovered the new variant.

In a statement on Friday, the WHO designated it as a "variant of concern," naming it "omicron" after a letter in the Greek alphabet.

After convening a group of experts to assess the data, the U.N. health agency said that "preliminary evidence suggests an increased risk of reinfection with this variant," as compared to other variants.

"The number of cases of this variant appears to be increasing in almost all provinces in South Africa," the WHO said.

Why are scientists worried about this new variant?

It appears to have a high number of mutations — about 30 — in the coronavirus' spike protein, which could affect how easily it spreads to people.



Sharon Peacock, who has led genetic sequencing of COVID-19 in Britain at the University of Cambridge, said the data so far suggest the new variant has mutations "consistent with enhanced transmissibility," but said that "the significance of many of the mutations is still not known."

Lawrence Young, a virologist at the University of Warwick, described omicron as "the most heavily mutated version of the virus we have seen," including potentially worrying changes never before seen all in the same virus.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the U.S.' top infectious diseases doctor, said American officials had arranged a call with their South African counterparts to find out more details and said there was no indication the variant had yet arrived in the U.S.

What is known and not known about the variant?

Scientists know that omicron is genetically distinct from previous variants including

the beta and delta variants, but do not know if these genetic changes make it any more transmissible or dangerous. So far, there is no indication the variant causes more severe disease. It will likely take weeks to sort out if omicron is more infectious and if vaccines are still effective against it.

Peter Openshaw, a professor of experimental medicine at Imperial College London said it was "extremely unlikely" that current vaccines wouldn't work, noting they are effective against numerous other variants. Even though some of the genetic changes in omicron appear worrying, it's still unclear if they will pose a public health threat. Some previous variants, like the beta variant, initially alarmed scientists but didn't end up spreading very far.

"We don't know if this new variant could get a toehold in regions where delta is," said Sharon Peacock of the University of Cambridge. "The jury is out on how well this variant will do where there are other variants circulating." To date, delta is by far

the most predominant form of COVID-19, accounting for more than 99% of sequences submitted to the world's biggest public database.

How did this new variant arise?

The coronavirus mutates as it spreads and many new variants, including those with worrying genetic changes, often just die out. Scientists monitor COVID-19 sequences for mutations that could make the disease more transmissible or deadly, but they cannot determine that simply by looking at the virus.

Peacock said the variant "may have evolved in someone who was infected but could then not clear the virus, giving the virus the chance to genetically evolve," in a scenario similar to how experts think the alpha variant — which was first identified in England — also emerged, by mutating in an immune-compromised person.

Travel restrictions

"With delta, it took many, many weeks into India's terrible wave before it became clear what was going on and delta had already seeded itself in many places in the world and it was too late to do anything about it," said Jeffrey Barrett, director of COVID-19 Genetics at the Wellcome Sanger Institute. "We may be at an earlier point with this new variant so there may still be time to do something about it."

The U.S. said it would ban travel from South Africa and seven other African nations by non-US citizens beginning Monday, November 29.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

21-Year-Old Ivory Coast Man Creates African Inspired Emojis For His Culture



(Source: Ashleigh Lakieva Atwell, blavity.com; BBC News Africa)

O'Plerou Grebet of the Ivory Coast created over 350 emojis based on his culture after being underwhelmed by the lack of options. The West African man started making emojis with his people in mind and launched Zouzoukwa, meaning "image" in the Bété language. The images include an array of popular food dishes, regional transit and dark-skinned Black people making faces typically used by Africans.

The idea struck him suddenly while he was conversing with a friend on WhatsApp.

"Seeing all the smileys embedded in the application, I thought that was missing some to describe our Ivorian realities, to make our jokes," the 21-year-old recalled to French publication Le Monde in 2018. "And I thought I could create it myself!"

Described as a shy graphic design artist, Grebet won the Young Talent Award at the Africa Digital Communication Days back in March. The rising tech entrepreneur collaborated with the French channel Canal+ to feature his emojis on social platforms during the football World Cup over the summer. Zouzoukwa is only available on Android devices right now, but Grebet is working on expansion.

When Grebet shared his first image on Instagram, a plate of cassava and plantain, it received over 1,000 likes. So far, he's won two awards for his work.

"Everything I see around me, on a daily basis, inspires me," he said. "I draw for a very long time, alone in my room, first on paper and then on the Photoshop software."

Grebet taught himself how to create the emojis after getting fed up of seeing just poverty images of Africa. He said his parents gave him the creative freedom to "let him follow his passion".

"The next step for me, after Zouzoukwa, is to learn about 3D and virtual reality, in order to create filters and find a new way to pay tribute to the African culture," Grebet said.



Tongues of Fire

By Beverly Spears

Resurrecting Christmas



What follows is not the well-worn admonishment to put Christ back in Christmas, or the trope reminder that Jesus is the reason for the season. Christians the world over know Christ is the real reason for the season, but let’s be real, the secularization of Christmas is here to stay. Although by definition, it’s impossible to have a secular Christ-mass, or a Holi(y)day without anything holy about it, but no one seems hung up on the words anymore.

When I was growing up, the story of Jesus’ birth and Santa Claus existed together in relative harmony. As long as the birth of Jesus was the dominant narrative, it was all good. I preferred Jesus over Santa Claus anyway. I mean, I wanted those presents under the tree, but Santa scared the-you-know-what out of me! Santa seemed a lot like the Old Testament God; he knew all, he saw all, and he would punish you with no presents if you got out of line.

Baby Jesus on the other hand was precious, loving, and approachable. The shepherds were welcomed, the animals gathered around his manger and the angels were singing, Joy to the World. It just didn’t get better than that. But then Baby Jesus began to fade into the background and Santa came to dominate the scene. Now, even Santa himself is expendable. Many of the younger kids I know are very clear on the matter; Christmas presents come from the store.

The decline of the religiosity of Christmas corresponds to the steadily declining number of people in America and Europe who identify themselves as Christians, or as Christians actively practicing the Faith. People increasingly question the relevance of any organized religion in their lives. Some reject what they see as superstitious belief, or at best spiritual immaturity. Some have been deeply wounded by Christianity. Many Christians who would like to hold onto the Faith are reluctant to do so because Christianity has been co-opted by people who cloak themselves in the Faith of Jesus, but do not practice the gospel message of love and inclusion, such as welcoming LGBTQ+ people into their Faith communities.

Many Christians cling ever more tightly to the literal interpretation of the Bible and as a result, Christianity has been increasingly reduced to an ideology of duality and polarization: fact or fiction, divine revelation or superstitious belief. Care

only for your own spiritual needs and material desires, or care for the spiritual, physical, and emotional wellbeing of oppressed people. Love one another, or only love people who look like you and believe exactly as you believe.

I don’t live my Faith or approach the Bible as an ‘either-or.’ The Bible is full of symbolic meaning – even those who believe the text to be the inerrant word of God seek the deeper message in the scriptures. For me, the New Testament teachings of Jesus have both literal and metaphorical meaning. Jesus himself clearly meant the parables as metaphors but he quite literally meant for us to love God and love our neighbors as ourselves. He literally meant for us to feed and clothe and house people in need. He literally meant for us to welcome the stranger.

I’m not falling into the polarization trap and I’m not letting go of Christmas. Christ-mass is a deeply spiritual celebration, but we miss its significance if we don’t explore the theology and politics integrated into the spiritual message. The stories of the birth of Jesus are so much wider and deeper in meaning than is usually perceived by Christians and non-Christians alike.

If we rely on the facts of the Christmas story, we are in for some confusion. First of all, there is not one story, but two birth narratives, from two different Gospel writers. The stories of the birth of Jesus only appear in two of the four Gospels of the New Testament -- Mathew and Luke -- and they are very different and frequently contradictory accounts.

Mathew’s birth story is much, much shorter than Luke’s, and believe it or not, Joseph is the main character, not Jesus. King Herod drives most of the plot. In Mathew, there is no mention of the birth itself, no swaddling clothes, no manger, no shepherds, no bright star, no singing angels announce the good news of Jesus’ birth. In Mathew, no angel of the Lord appears to announce to Mary that the Holy Spirit will come upon her, and she will become pregnant and give birth to a savior. The only angel in Mathew appears to Joseph. The star, the manger, the shepherds, the angels, all begin Luke’s Gospel.

Most people conflate the two Gospel accounts into one narrative. The combination gives us the beloved Christmas Eve pageant. I urge you to read, really read

these two narratives; not to diminish them, not to debunk them, but to establish that the truth of Christmas has always been in the deeper meaning, not the facts. The facts don’t line up and that’s okay. That doesn’t make the stories untrue, because these stories are symbols that point beyond the words on the page.

The Christmas story must be understood in historical context, and the conditions of life in Roman-occupied first-century Palestine. Historically, humans had been laying claim to virgin births long before the events of the first Christmas. A divine king made total sense in those times. Augustus Caesar himself was considered the son of a god. The Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) foretold of the coming of a messiah. These were familiar concepts to people in Jesus’ time.

The coming Messiah was supposed to be a warrior King of the Jews. Jesus turned out to be a very different Messiah. He didn’t topple the Roman Empire by force, nor apparently was that ever God’s plan. Jesus taught that God was a God of Love, not war. Indeed, Jesus taught that God is Love and if we live in Love, we live in God, and God lives in us.

The Christmas message has powerful social and political meaning; it is a subversive story that promises systemic change. The Roman Empire would not be brought down by might, but by the personal, religious, and social transformation of ordinary people. The revolution begins with Mary, the mother of Jesus in a song of praise known as The Magnificat. In Luke’s Gospel, Mary sings a transcendent hymn in thanksgiving to God because God has done great things! God has chosen her, a lowly person, to be the bearer of God’s self into the world in human form. She will birth Emmanuel, God with Us. God coming in human form in such a humble way means her oppressed people have been empowered to throw off their shackles. Vindication for overtaxed, overworked, and underfed people was at hand. Freedom from Roman tyranny would now be a reality! Mary, a woman of the peasant class is the vehicle through which God works. God’s Kingdom is being established in the world in solidarity with ordinary human beings! Christianity began as a grassroots social movement!

Remember, these Gospel accounts were written with the benefit of hindsight. Jesus

was crucified long before the first Gospels were written. Mathew is generally believed to have been composed around 85 CE, and Luke ten to fifteen years later. After the crucifixion, Jesus’s followers were expecting his imminent return to earth to establish God’s Kingdom. By the time the gospels were written, Jesus still had not returned. The birth narratives were also written after the failure of the first Jewish revolt, and the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans. It would seem that the promises of God had not panned out. So why write as if everything had come to fruition just as divinely planned?

The reason for the Christmas story is, as the Reverend Jesse Jackson would preach 2000 years later as part of another civil and social justice movement, to keep hope alive! It was to remind Christian Jews and converted gentiles that everything Jesus was and everything he taught was still relevant, and they were still empowered.

Jesus preached the need for personal spiritual transformation. He preached about love, and inclusion – about inherent human worth, dignity, and equality. But it wasn’t just for the sake of our own individual souls. It was for the sake of justice for all people.

Certainly, there are times throughout history when leaders have passed laws that brought about social change, but today the civil and social justice gains of the past are being dismantled by those in political leadership. One doesn’t have to be a Christian or a member of any organized religion to realize that people in high places alone cannot be relied upon to bring about lasting social, economic, and racial justice. One doesn’t have to believe in a higher power to know that true social transformation is driven from the grassroots.

I believe the Christmas story serves as a reminder, then and now, that hope is still alive! As a Christian I believe that God is always working in us, through us, and as us, to give birth to love, justice, and peace, in the world.

Christmas Blessings to us all!

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Rev. Beverly Spears is an ordained American Baptist minister, teacher and preacher of Evolutionary Christianity.



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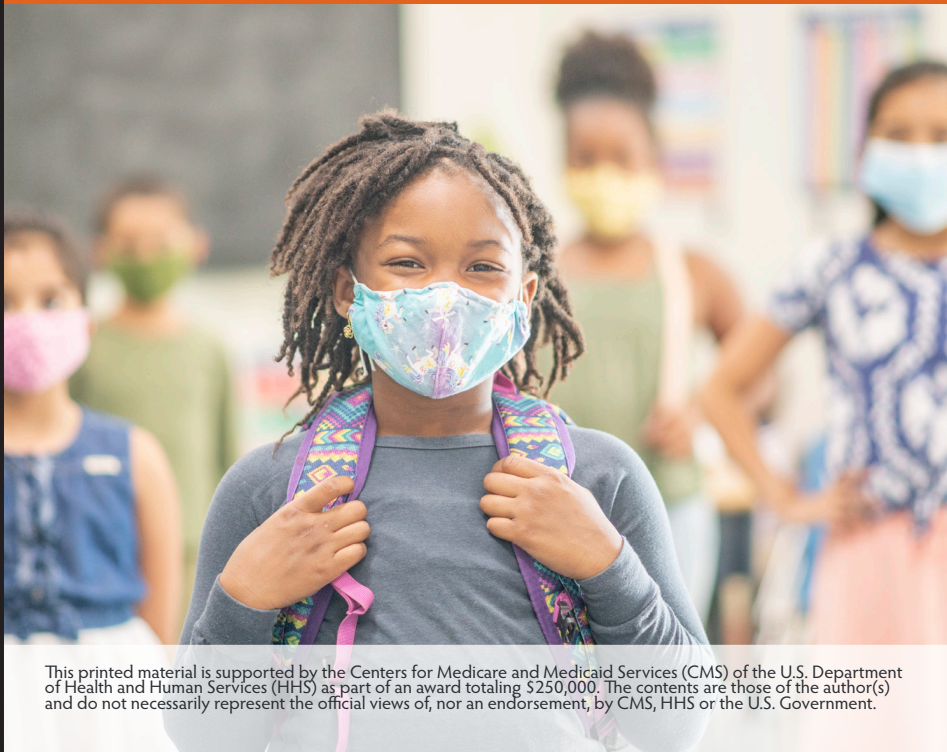
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Faith Leaders Learn to Build Communities of Wealth

USC Cecil Murray Center sponsors session for clergy and lay outline steps to teaching parishioners financial literacy

By Cora Jackson-Fossett
L.A. Sentinel, Religion Editor
(lasentinel.net)

Faith leaders can play a decisive role in helping African Americans and other minorities become financially secure and the USC Cecil Murray Center for Community Engagement (CMCCE) is preparing clergy and lay to achieve that goal.

Through online interactive sessions, the Murray Center outlines the steps that pastors and faith-based influencers can take to educate their members. The series kicked-off on November 3 with a webinar entitled, “Building Back Wealth in Communities of Color” and scores of people tuned in for the class.

The Rev. Dr. D. Najuma Smith-Pollard, CMCCE program manager and pastor of Word of Encouragement Community Church in L.A., moderated the 90-minute event, which was co-sponsored by CIT-One West Bank. The program also included the Rev. Frank Jackson, CEO of The Group of Village Companies in Irvine and a corporate financial executive with 20-years of experience, and the Rev. Donald Cook II, pastor of Harvest Tabernacle Bible Church in L.A., who holds Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in business and management.

As part of CMCCE’s ongoing effort to equip faith leaders to transform underserved areas, Smith-Pollard explained that the session would focus on “elevating your community” through strategies on economic recovery and wealth building. The panelists also shared practical actions that could yield significant results for churches and organizations.

“Last year, the Murray Center hosted sessions around how to financially maintain [ministries] during the pandemic. Now, we want to begin to talk about building back wealth and how the faith community can take lead in teaching communities of color how to prepare for the future,” Rev. Smith-Pollard said in her introductory remarks.

“We also want to encourage you to think critically how this information can be shared with your congregation or the people you serve,” added Smith-Pollard, ac-



USC Cecil Murray Center for Community Engagement officially launched in 2012

knowledging that nonprofit and faith-based groups could impart the strategies to their constituents as well.

“Remember, your people are your number one asset. When they are strong, the church or organization is strong,” she insisted. Following her comments, the Rev. Dr. Cecil L. “Chip” Murray delivered a brief welcome address.

Next, Rev. Frank Jackson opened the first section of the program by discussing the state of wealth across demographic groups and the definition of wealth as perceived by different age groups and ethnicities. Emphasizing that his goal was to persuade people to be responsible stewards, he then proceeded to cite the facts and principles that assist with wealth building.

“The difference between your assets minus your liabilities equals wealth. You may want to create a survey to find out how your congregation or the people you serve and work with see wealth,” said Jackson who is also an associate minister at New Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church in Inglewood.

Noting that generational wealth often evolves from inherited property such as houses or land, he said that minority groups fall behind since they have a lower

number of homeowners and less income, which leads the disparity.

“According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the poverty rate is 23-to-25% in the Black and Hispanic/Latino communities and 9% in the White community. Highlighting this issue of concern within your congregations and then pulling resources from within your congregation [can] help you establish your wealth building ministry,” he said.

Education also aids in building wealth, said Jackson, who cited that a four-year college graduate makes about \$30,000 more than a high school graduate in entry-level positions. Also, he recommended increasing finances by reducing credit card debt because “the more debt a person has, the less opportunity.”

Another fact he brought up was that the nation’s 48 million Black Americans have \$1.3 trillion in spending power, yet Jackson still urged, “We want our congregations or those that we’re servicing to be better stewards over their resources.”

Rev. Donald Cook stressed the importance of generating income to build wealth. The added funds may be the result of employment salary, financial investments or other business activities. He also explained the distinction between bad debt and good debt.

“Bad debt is that which does not increase wealth and or is used to purchase goods and services that have no lasting value. Good debt is that which increases your network or helps you generate a value that allows you to manage your finances more effectively, to leverage your wealth to buy things you need and to handle unforeseen emergencies,” expressed Cook.

He went on to urge attendees to consider their debt to income ratio, which will aid in securing credit worthiness. Two other acts he recommended was saving half of your income and maintaining a credit score between 742-to-799.

“Lenders determine insurance rates and set premiums for auto and home loans for your coverage depending on your credit score,” he said. “There are even landlords out there [who] want to know where is your job, what position you have, how much you make and what’s your credit score because they want to make sure that you can afford the rent or price.”

Cook advised the audience to visit credit-karma.com or freecreditreport.com to obtain credit scores. He also listed some of the pathways to wealth and named entrepreneurship or starting your own business as the first way to add income.

“The scripture says your gift will make room for you. Find out from your congregation, what gifts they may have, then show them how to go into this entrepreneurial opportunity, how to properly set it up, get the business licenses, etc.,” Cook said, adding that investments and real estate are also optional ways to increase wealth.

“Building Back Wealth in Communities of Color” Faith Leader Sessions will be presented online again on Wednesday, December 1, at 10 a.m. To register visit: <https://bit.ly/cm-wealth>.

The Cecil Murray Center for Community Engagement equips faith leaders to transform underserved communities. Through capacity building and consultative services, the center helps leaders and their organizations become full partners in social change through community development and civic engagement work. For more information visit: crcc.usc.edu/events-and-training/murraycenter.



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A Column from Spokane's Black Muslim Community

The Veil of Islamic Life

By Harry “Brocq” Whitman

A thought occurred to me at Jumuah. When the sitting became pleasurable, and the hearts were present, and the eyes were flowing, and the heads were bowed, and the souls felt remorse for their negligence, and the resolution to fix their affairs swelled within them, and the tongues of self-blame were working at the falsehood in them, seeking to earnestly diffuse it, and to make them abandon their caution for fear or worldly loss.

I said to myself: Why is it that this consciousness of awakening does not last? For, truly, I see the ‘self’ and ‘awakening’ in such gatherings as two pure friends. Yet, when we depart this soil, they grow estranged from one another.

I reflected and came to this: It is not that ‘self’ becomes unconscious when it leaves such gatherings, it stays awakened. So too the heart remains knowing of Allah (God). However the interpretations of the experience splinter and grow abundant in the course of our worldly lives and this wearies our thought processes. For while our thought processes are meant to be engaged in coming to know Allah (God), this mental activity grows busy with figuring out how to bring the world to us so that we may attain the “needs” that our ‘self’ perceives having. This worldly psychic activity suffused the heart until the body is enslaved to it as its prisoner.

And so our thoughts turn: How to attain food, drink, and clothing? The mind bends itself upon these concerns and upon how we can attain them: What should be sought today? What should be saved for tomorrow, or for the coming years?

Our thoughts and senses fill up with the prospects of gaining and storing. Then, one suddenly realizes that one has bodily emissions that need discharging, that is harmful to keep inside. One recognizes the need to marry and apprehends that this cannot happen without earning something of the world. This further occupied ones thought, and one acts according to the dictates of this situation.



Then of the union comes a child and a father becomes concerned for him and about him. And preoccupied with working out the principles of the world that lead to gain and with the realities that this imposes.

Now should it come to pass that such a one attends a religious gathering he does so having satisfied his hunger and his need to marry. In the midst of the gathering he pulls together his resolve and forgets the affairs of the world that were previously commanding his mind.

The admonition spoken to him in the gathering is alone now with his heart. It reminds him of what he knows is good. It beckons him towards what he recognizes to be right. Then the deck hands of his heart rise up in the boat of his recognition until they bring themselves to the port of account for their negligence. They summon to account their senses for their past faults. That is when the resolutions to make amends are set firm.

If only the ‘self’ had been free of the mundane demands of worldly life as I have described it. It would have busied

itself fruitfully in the service of its Creator. And once it had docked in the harbor of His love, it would have been distracted from everyone and everything, owing to its complete preoccupation with drawing ever nearer to Him.

Here is the reason monks, priests and other ascetics have been endeavors to rely on seclusion and to immerse themselves in the task of cutting their lives off from the obstacles between them and God. In accordance with their striving, they reach the define service they have sought, just as the harvest accords with the planting.

Yet, I have noticed in this condition a subtle problem: if the ‘self’ is continuously awake, in the sense we are speaking of, it falls into something worse than what it was seeking to avoid in its preoccupation with the world to begin with: Self-glorification and looking down on others.

The overpowering knowledge of the ‘self’ can lead to a certain admiration that leaves the ‘self’ vulnerable to the summonses of “to me”, and “I have”, and “I deserve” . To leave one’s ‘self’ in the vicinity of sins that buffet it from side to side is better than it succumbing to this disease of self-exaltation.

Perched upon the brink of the riverbank and fearful of falling, the ‘self’ realizes humility in worship as it should be. This state is far better for it than that of exaltation of ‘self’ and contempt of ‘other’. Such is the condition of the majority of creation. It is for this reason that Allah (God) has distracted people from this station of uninterrupted, unobstructed wakefulness. Hence one who plants the seeds of good deeds, whose plants are growing well, must inevitably have a fall that causes his eye of fear towards Allah(-God) to open up. It is this that allows his worship to find acceptance, for it protects him from arrogance.

Even so does the Hadith tell us: “If you believers did not sin, Allah (God) would have done away with you and brought forth a people who sin and beseech Allah (God) for forgiveness, whom He thus forgives”.

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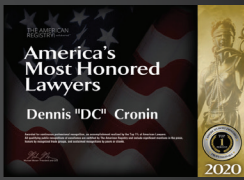
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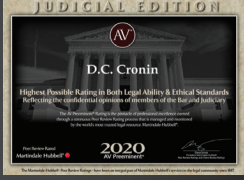
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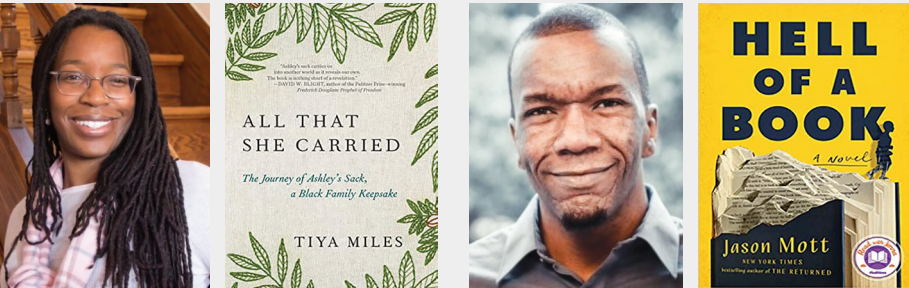


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Jason Mott and Tiya Miles Win 2021 National Book Awards



(Source: goodblacknews.org)

The National Book Foundation announced the 2021 National Book Awards winners list in November. Author and poet **Jason Mott** won the fiction prize for *Hell of a Book*, while author and historian **Tiya Miles** garnered the nonfiction prize for *All That She Carried: The Journey of Ashley’s Sack, a Black Family Keepsake*.

Mott’s *Hell of a Book* tells the story of an author on a promotional tour and his haunted past and present in a surreal, narrative style.

“I would like to dedicate this award to all the other mad kids, to all the outsiders, the weirdos, the bullied,” he said in his acceptance speech. “The ones so strange they had no choice but to be misunderstood by the world and by those around them. The ones who, in spite of this, refuse to outgrow their imagination, refuse to abandon their dreams and refuse to deny, diminish their identity, or their truth, or their loves, unlike so many others.”

Miles’ *All That She Carried* traces the history of an American family through a cotton sack that an enslaved ancestor gave to

her daughter in the 19th century as they were about to be separated and sold apart.

In her acceptance speech, Miles thanked her editor Molly Turpin for championing her decision to write a book about “an old bag.” “Your face lit up,” Miles said. “You were so curious. You were so receptive. You were the perfect editor for this project.”

Winners in competitive categories each receive \$10,000.

Established in 1950, the National Book Awards are intended to celebrate the following core beliefs: Books are essential to a thriving cultural landscape; Books and literature provide a depth of engagement that helps to protect, stimulate, and promote discourse in American society; and Books and literature are for everyone, no matter where the reader is situated geographically, economically, racially, or otherwise.

Judging panels looked through more than 1,800 submitted books. This year’s judges included acclaimed authors such as Eula Biss, Ilya Kaminsky and Charles Yu, winner in 2020 of the National Book Award for fiction.

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When deciding whether to vaccinate your kids against COVID-19, it can feel stressful. You are not alone, and we would like to offer some helpful tips.



Be careful of people who don't acknowledge your questions or help find valid sources to answer them.



Take a break from social media to avoid information and opinion overload.



Get support from a counselor or the Washington Listens line (833.681.0211) if the decision is causing you to feel overwhelmed.



Compare the risks on each side with information from credible sources like your pediatrician.

What Parents Should Know About the COVID-19 Vaccine For Kids 5-11

By Cara Jones

Reprinted from BlackDoctor.org

A COVID-19 vaccine has finally arrived for children ages 5 to 11 – and with it, some important questions from parents. Many are wondering about safety. Others are asking whether the coronavirus is enough of a threat to their child to require a vaccine.

Here are some answers that might help from Dr. Donna Curtis, a pediatric infectious disease specialist at Children's Hospital in Aurora, Colorado.

What is the vaccine, and where can I get it?

It's one-third of the dose of the Pfizer vaccine that has been given to adults since December 2020 and adolescents 12 and up since May. Tens of millions of Americans have received Pfizer's vaccine, and it's considered very safe.

Data presented to the Food and Drug Administration showed the new dose was 90.7% effective at preventing symptomatic COVID-19 in 5- to 11-year-olds.

The vaccine is being distributed through pediatricians, pharmacies and others. Locations are listed at [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov). As with adults and adolescents, young children will need a second dose three weeks later.

Does my child even need a vaccine for COVID-19?

"We don't think of children as the highest-risk group," Dr. Curtis, who has done research on vaccines in immunocompromised children, says. However, according to data reviewed by the CDC's advisory panel on vaccines, as of Oct. 10, almost 2 million 5 to 11-year-olds have gotten ill from COVID-19 and 94 have died.

COVID-19 also has been linked to multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children, or MIS-C, a condition that causes swelling of the heart, brain and other organs. As of early October, more than 5,200 children had been diagnosed with MIS-C, and 46 died, according to CDC data.

A vaccine goes beyond giving protection to the child who receives it, Dr. Curtis adds. It can stop the spread of the disease to nearby children and family members, some of whom might have conditions that put them at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Those conditions include obesity, diabetes, weakened immune systems and congenital heart defects.

The chance that a child will develop severe COVID-19 that requires hospitalization or develop MIS-C remains low, "but still the risk is too high and too devastating to our



children, and far higher than for many other diseases for which we vaccinate children," CDC Director Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky told the agency's advisory panel before it reviewed safety data on Tuesday.

What are the possible side effects of the vaccine?

Common side effects include pain, redness and swelling at the injection site. Some children had fevers, fatigue, body aches, headaches, chills or swollen lymph nodes – similar to what happens in adults.

Among the 3,109 children in the clinical trial that evaluated the Pfizer vaccine in this age group, there were no serious side effects, the FDA said in granting emergency use authorization.

What about the risk of heart issues, such as myocarditis and pericarditis?

Although no cases were seen in the clinical trial, myocarditis and pericarditis – swelling of the heart muscle or its lining – has been a rare side effect in other groups, particularly in adolescent and young men who got the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines.

That problem affected a small percentage of people who were vaccinated, Dr. Curtis says. The FDA used statistical modeling to

predict the risks of heart inflammation in 5- to 11-year-olds and concluded the overall benefits of getting vaccinated far outweighed the risk.

As a parent, Dr. Curtis says she understands heart inflammation sounds scary. "But generally, these are mild to moderate illnesses." Patients are hospitalized, given ibuprofen or a similar drug, and go home in a few days, generally with no long-term issues. The risk of myocarditis from COVID-19 itself, she says, is much higher.

My child already had COVID-19. Is vaccination still needed?

"The recommendation is yes," according to Dr. Curtis. Immunity can wane with time. "We hear about it more when we talk about vaccines, but we've seen the exact thing with coronavirus infection." A vaccine can boost their immune response and help prevent future infections.

Most of my child's classmates are getting vaccinated. Can I just count on herd immunity?

"I don't think that is a safe thing to assume," Dr. Curtis adds. Vaccinated people are less likely to get sick, are protected from serious illness and seem less likely to spread the disease. But they can still get infected, and they can still be contagious.

Also, an unvaccinated child would be at risk for catching the coronavirus from an adult outside of school, Dr. Curtis notes. "So I think the only way to maximally protect your child is to get them vaccinated."

What can I do to protect my children who are too young to be vaccinated?

"You can protect them by getting everyone in the household vaccinated," Dr. Curtis shares, and by making sure their caregivers are vaccinated, too. It's called "cocooning," – surrounding the people who can't be vaccinated with people who are.

What other factors should I be weighing?

By protecting a child from being sick, a vaccine protects an entire family's well-being, Dr. Curtis says. "We are preventing the parent from having to take time off from work, the child from missing school. We're preventing them from potential hospitalization" and long-term problems such as the sometimes debilitating symptoms that come with "long COVID."

Children can easily spread diseases to adults, Dr. Curtis warns. "So the benefit to vaccinating children is huge."

The CDC advisory panel was told that vaccinating children in this age group would help prevent roughly 600,000 COVID-19 cases between November and next March.

How can I prepare my child for their vaccination?

The American Academy of Pediatrics has a page full of tips such as talking about the experience in positive terms and reminding children that vaccines keep people healthy.

Should a parent feel anxious right now? Or happy?

"This is something that I've been waiting for, for a very long time," Dr. Curtis, who has two children, ages 9 and 11 says. "And I'm very excited about it."

COVID-19 can be severe in this age group, she concludes. "For me, the choice is clear that the vaccine is so much safer than my children getting the coronavirus. And it's also a way that I can help protect their friends and help protect other people in our family."

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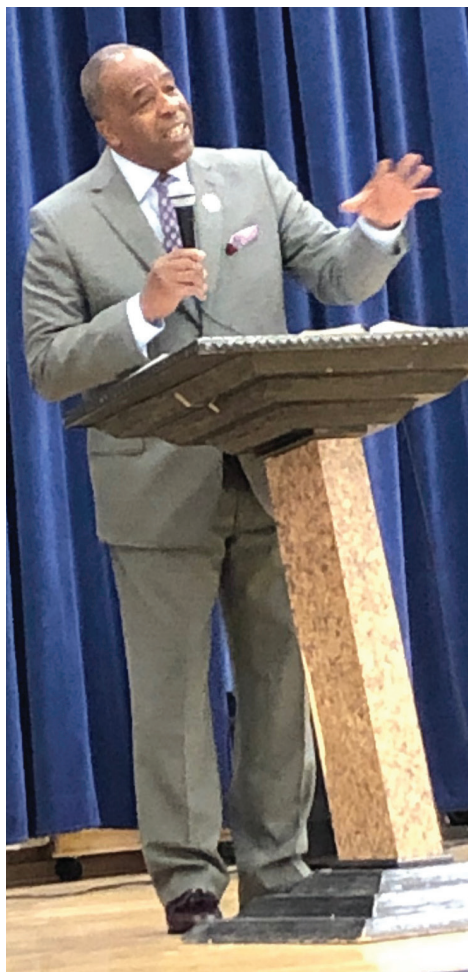
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Spokane Minister's Fellowship Hosts Thanksgiving Service



The Spokane Minister's Fellowship hosted their annual Thanksgiving community service on Thanksgiving morning, November 25, at the Martin Luther King Family Outreach Center in Spokane's East Central neighborhood.

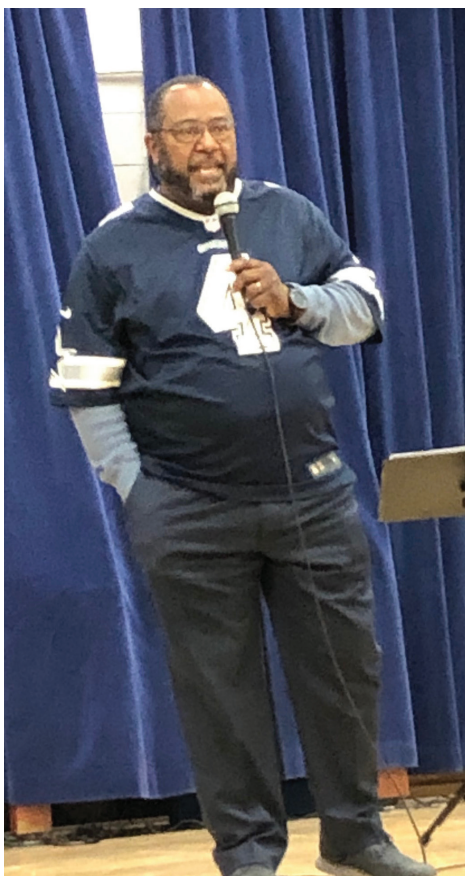
Pastor, Benjamin Watson of Bethel AME Church acted as the emcee for the service and was joined by Deacon Johnson and Rev. Robinson who led the morning devotion. Pastor Manning of Word of Faith Christian Fellowship offered words of welcome and Superintendent Kinlow of Holy Temple Church of God in Christ led the alter call.

The Spokane Community Choir joined their voices together to offer songs of

praise and Rev. Kendricks of Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church offered the spoken word, reflecting on how things were for the church community in Nov of 2020 due to the COVID pandemic and reminding everyone of how much we all have to be thankful for, not just on thanksgiving, but all year long.

"The church is not in a building," Rev. Kendricks shared. "Everywhere I go, I'm in church because the church is in me."

Following the service, the Minister's Fellowship offered a to-go Thanksgiving meal to those in attendance, which was prepared by Soul Lounge Bar & Grill, located on Sprague Avenue.





MERRY
CHRISTMAS
and
Happy New Year
from the
Carl Maxey Center



There was a lot of excitement under the big tent during the Numerica Tree Lighting Ceremony that took place in Riverfront Park on Saturday November 27.

The Carl Maxey Center invited Santa Clause to join us at our table and he was a huge hit with the kids and even more of a hit with the parents who stood in line to take selfies.

There were a few puzzled looks, but a whole lot more smiling faces and joy and laughter. We're already making plans for next year.



A special thank you to Santa for stopping by Spokane to hand out candy canes and share in the Holiday Spirit and thank you to the city of Spokane for inviting us to be a part of the festivities.

Wishing you a Happy Holiday Season and Best Wishes for the New Year.

carlmaxeycenter.org



Spokane Liberty Park Library

The East Central Neighborhood Gets a New Library



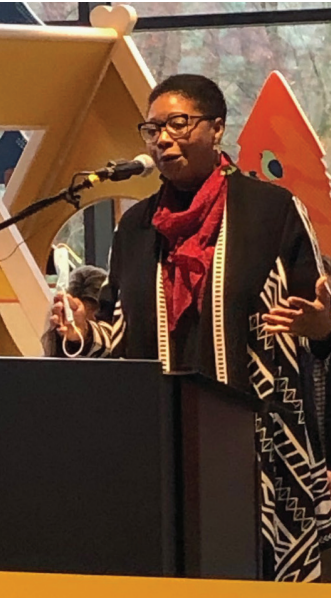
Spokane’s East Central Neighborhood has a brand new library located at 402 S. Pittsburg in Liberty Park.

The library, which was a part of the renovation project funded by the 2018 Library bond, was completed and opened to the public in a ribbon cutting ceremony on November 12.

The new library is an importance resource for the community. It has free meeting spaces, a children’s play area, a curated art collection, a quiet reading room and offers faxing, copying, scanning, and printing services.

The library is open Monday - Thursday from 9am - 7pm; Friday & Saturday 10am - 5pm; and Noon - 4pm on Sunday.

For more information visit: spokanelibrary.org/liberty-park



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Are you between the ages of 12-24 and experiencing housing instability or uncertainty? You may be eligible for the **Centralized Diversion Fund**, which provides one-time financial support to make a housing solution happen outside of the homelessness system.

Benefits Include:

- ✓ Access to one-time financial assistance for a housing solution
- ✓ Use funds flexibly and creatively, as long as it's related to getting housed, from support with move-in costs to relocation and more
- ✓ Get housed immediately - without joining a waitlist or the backlogged housing system

Am I Eligible for Centralized Diversion Fund?

To request CDF, you must be:

- A currently unaccompanied youth/young adult (age 12-24), OR at risk of becoming unaccompanied
- Experiencing a housing crisis
- CANNOT be used for homeless housing program

For More Info, Contact:
Julius Henrichsen,
Youth Homelessness Community Coordinator
jhenrichsen@voaspokane.org



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Spokane Native
Natasha Hill
Announces
Run for Congress



Spokane, WA -- Spokane Attorney Natasha Hill announced on Saturday, November 6, that she is running for Congress against incumbent Cathy McMorris Rodgers in Washington’s Fifth Congressional District.

Hill is a fourth generation Spokane resident, raised in Spokane’s Hillyard neighborhood by her grandmother and mother. Her childhood was marked with hard times and family struggles but she had community support and persisted, graduating from Rogers High School in Spokane in 2000, and the University of Washington in 2003. Hill attended law school at the Southwestern School of Law and has been a licensed attorney since 2007. She owns her own law firm in Spokane, is an adjunct law professor teaching at Gonzaga University, and just finished serving on the Spokane County Redistricting Committee. Hill also serves on the boards of Northwest Justice Project, the Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery and is the President of the Board for the Pre-Employment Preparation Program.

Hill has already earned the endorsements of prominent Spokane democrats, including Washington Senate Majority Leader Andy Billig, State Representatives Marcus Riccelli and Timm Ormsby. Rep. Ormsby said, “Natasha has proven to be a fierce advocate for the Spokane community. She’s a hard worker, incredibly intelligent, and is driven by compassion for those around her. I’m endorsing Natasha Hill for Congress because I’m confident she can take those qualities and deliver real solutions for Eastern Washington.”

In a statement Hill said, “I’m running for congress because growing up in Hillyard I know first hand what it means to live in a community that was overlooked and under invested in. The stakes in the upcoming midterm elections are simply too high to allow Cathy’s brand of politics to hold back progress not only in our community but across the country. My campaign is about delivering on an agenda that works for Eastern Washington families and businesses and bringing new leadership to our region. Eastern Washington voters deserve an invested representative that will show up, listen, and make sure their voices are heard in D.C.”

Hill says that her agenda is to make sure Eastern Washington has a living wage for an honest day’s work, well funded schools that prepare our children for a rapidly changing future, access to high quality affordable healthcare, whether you’re located in rural Whitman county or the heart of Spokane, and the infrastructure necessary to support that and more.

Natasha Hills’ campaign officially launched on Sunday, November 21st. If elected, she will be the first Black woman to hold federal office in Eastern Washington history.

For more information about Natasha Hill visit: natashaforcongress.com

Howard University Protest Ends After Students Reach Confidential Agreement With Administration

By Shannon Dawson and Anoa Changa
(Source: newsone.com)

Thirty-four days into a protest that has captured the hearts and minds of many across the nation, student leaders announced the end to the occupation of Howard University’s Blackburn Center.

According to a press conference early Monday, the terms of the agreement are confidential but the students seemed pleased with the outcome overall.

Frank Tramble, Vice President & Chief Communications at Howard University, told 7News in a statement that the university had reached an agreement with the students.

“Howard University is pleased to announce we have come to an agreement with the students who occupied Blackburn,” Tramble said.

Students were also supported by The Live Movement, a national HBCU coalition, which helped to amplify student demands and updates.

“After 34 days of protesting, justice has been served for the HU students,” The Live Movement tweeted. “Though the journey has ended for BlackburnTakeover, TheLiveMovement mission has just begun. There is a divide between HBCU students and their administration. Our work is far from over. #BlackburnTakeover.”

Jasmine Joof, a sophomore at Howard and



a spokesperson for #BlackburnTakeover, told CNN the group “achieved increased scrutiny, transparency, and accountability.”

Joof previously told the outlet CNN that she became “sick with congestion, coughing, and headaches” for weeks after discovering mold growing in her dorm. She reported the issue to her campus RA in September to no avail.

“It’s active negligence to their students,” Joof, who is also a spokeswoman for the protest, said, adding, “They have had every opportunity to fix these dorms.” Students

say that the campus’ crumbling infrastructure might be to blame for housing conditions deteriorating.

A petition was launched by students urging Howard to break its contract with Corvias Inc., the same company that maintains the campus’ buildings. Howard’s president has not commented publicly about the situation, citing that he and other school officials were working to address the ongoing problem. “This is an aging campus,” Frederick said during his state of the university address.

Unfortunately, inadequate housing appears to be a problem at some other HBCUs across the country. Alivia Duncan, a senior at Clark Atlanta, revealed that students live in dorms with crumbling infrastructure, old furniture, and water-stained ceilings tiles that have caused mold to form throughout the dorms.

According to Duncan, the school was also slammed with a housing shortage when first-year students arrived in the fall. The university reportedly relocated some students to temporary off-campus housing until their rooms were fully renovated, FOX 5 reported.

“Funding is the key to all of this,” Duncan explained. “I’m not saying the schools don’t have responsibility, but with more funding, we are able to make sure that all of the (dorms) are up to date.”

Many HBCUs have been underfunded due to lower investments from state programs and a lower aggregation of assets invested into the school, typically referred to as endowments. According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs) have an average endowment of “\$15,000 per student compared to \$410,000 at non-HBCUs.”

President Biden plans to set aside \$2 billion to service educational programs and infrastructure at HBCUs with his Build Back Better Act proposal, but it could be a while before the bill is passed.

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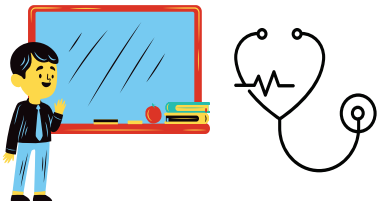
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A large graphic of a pair of headphones with the text "THINK GLOBALLY LISTEN LOCALLY" and "KYRS.ORG" inside the ear cups. Below the headphones, it says "thin air community radio 88.1 | 92.3 FM".

A photograph of a large, leafy green tree standing on a grassy hill under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds.

INDEPENDENT LOCAL MUSIC AND PERSPECTIVES

Celebrating 50 Years of Love Peace and Soul

Source: D.L Chandler, blackamericaweb.com; Selena Hill, blackenterprise.com

Soul Train, the iconic dance show that was launched in 1971 by Donald “Don” Cornelius, was a groundbreaking weekly, 60-minute broadcast that revolutionized television by putting a national spotlight on Black music, style, and dance trends. The history making program that aired for 35 years is celebrating its 50th birthday this year.

Soul Train’s creator and host, Don Cornelius, was born on September 27, 1936 on the South Side of Chicago and raised in the historic Bronzeville neighborhood. After serving in the Marines, Cornelius was honorably discharged after 18 months and began working a series of odd jobs before betting on himself and taking a broadcasting course. The risky move paid off and in 1966, Cornelius with his distinctive baritone voice, was hired by local station WVON. In 1967, he was hired by WCIU-TV where he hosted the “A Black’s View of the News” program.

Cornelius started the “Soul Train” show on WCIU in Chicago. After becoming a local hit in the Chicago area, Cornelius moved Soul Train to Los Angeles where is was picked up for national syndication in 1971. For its national debut episode in October of that year, Gladys Knights & The Pips, Eddie Kendricks, Bobby Hutton, and Honey Cone were the featured performers.

The show was best known for showcasing performances from African American singers and young local dancers. Along with the music and dancing, Soul Train also had its signature elements each week, the Soul Train Scrambleboard (where a man and woman had 60 seconds to arrange letters on a magnetic board to spell out the name of a current celebrity) and the Soul Train Line (where dancers



Photo: Michael Ochs Archives / Stringer

would show off their best moves while moving down two columns of fellow dancers). The Soul Train line went on to become an essential part of dance parties in the Black community.

Soul Train became a massive hit and a staple of pop culture for exposing Black acts to a larger audience, as well as showcasing its famous dancers, the “Soul Train Line”, and Don Cornelius’ famous catchphrase that ended every show, “And you can bet your last money, it’s all gonna be a stone gas, honey. I’m Don Cornelius, and as always in parting, we wish you love, peace and soulllllll.”

Soul Train ballooned into a cultural phenomenon that spawned Soul Train Records in 1975, The Soul Train Music Awards, and the Soul Train Lady of Soul Awards.

Cornelius stepped down from hosting in 1993, but the show continued on in syndication until 2006 with Cornelius still working behind the scenes as a producer. In 2008, Cornelius sold the rights to the “Soul Train” to MadVision Entertainment, which brought the show to the Centric network for a brief time. In 2011, Magic Johnson and InterMedia brought the rights to the show, with archived episodes airing on Johnson’s Aspire network.

In 2012 Cornelius was found dead from an apparent suicide. He was 75 and was survived by two children, including his son, Don Jr.

The 2021 Soul Train Music Awards, presented by BET, recognized the 50th Anniversary of Soul Train. The Awards show was taped on November 20 at the legendary Apollo Theater in Harlem, NY. and hosted by actresses Tisha Campbell and Tichina Arnold from the hit 90’s sitcom Martin.

The program featured appearances by some of the brightest stars in Black culture and entertainment, including performances by Grammy award-winning singer-songwriter and producer Maxwell, who was presented with the Soul Train Legend Award, and multi-platinum singer-songwriter Ashanti, who received the Lady of Soul award.

Other performers included R&B super duo Bruno Mars and Anderson .Paak of Silk Sonic, songstress Ari Lennox, soul singer Leon Bridges, R&B singer Lucky Daye, singer-songwriter Summer Walker, and gospel artist Fred Hammond.

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Understanding Kwanzaa and the Seven Principles

Kwanzaa is a weeklong African American and Pan-African holiday that is celebrated from **December 26 through January 1**.

Kwanzaa was established in 1966 in the midst of the U.S. Black Liberation Movement by Dr. Maulana Karenga, a professor of Africana Studies at California State University, Long Beach. The holiday, which is the first that is specifically African American, is intended to honor and celebrate the African origins of African American culture.

Kwanzaa is a cultural holiday, not a religious one, so it is celebrated by people of all faith traditions who come together based on the rich, ancient, and varied common ground of their Africanness.

The origins of Kwanzaa come from the **first harvest celebrations of Africa**, which is where the name comes from. The word Kwanzaa is derived from the phrase “matunda ya kwanza”, which means “first fruits” in Swahili.

The first fruits celebrations in Africa, which were held annually to celebrate the harvest, are recorded as far back as ancient Egypt and have been celebrat-



ed in Africa throughout recorded history. In the tradition of many African Harvest festivals and first fruits celebrations, Kwanzaa is also celebrated for seven days.

Kwanzaa was created to introduce and reinforce seven basic values of African culture which contribute to building and reinforcing family, community and culture.

These values are called the *Nguzo Saba* in the Swahili language and are **THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF KWANZAA**, which include:

Umoja (unity) - To strive for and to maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race.

Kujichagulia (self-determination) - To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves.

Ujima (collective work and responsibility) - To build and maintain our community together and make our brothers’ and sisters’ problems our problems as well, and to solve them together.

Ujamaa (cooperative economics) - To build and maintain our own stores, shops, and other businesses and to profit from them together.

Nia (purpose) - To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to

restore our people to their traditional greatness.

Kuumba (creativity) - To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

Imani (faith) - To believe with all our hearts in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

One of the principles is highlighted on each of the seven days of the Kwanzaa celebration, and on each day participants reflect on how they can incorporate that principle into their lives and into the collective community.

In addition to reflecting on the principles, Kwanzaa is also intended to be a community gathering and celebration, “to reinforce the bonds between Black people, strengthen the community, and reaffirm a common identity, direction and purpose.” It is believed that through this connection the community will flourish.

For more information on Kwanzaa, its history and how to plan a celebration visit: www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org



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OUR VOICES

WARNING: Time is Running Out! The Return of Jim Crow is Pending

By Sonny Messiah Jiles
(Special to the AFRO, afro.com)

The adage “History Repeats Itself” is in full operation as Texas leads our nation back in time to the birth of Jim Crow. Some say Texas is leading the charge for other states to follow. The Texas legislature has passed laws to limit access to voting by changing dates, times and places where you can vote. They have put their poll watchers at the polls to intimidate voters and even set up a system to throw out votes if they contend the votes are not valid, just in case a Democrat wins. Now it seems the nation is attempting to make the same changes across the country.

But let’s look back at history. The Civil War was over, and the 13th and 14th Amendments opened the door for African Americans to vote. Black state legislators, mayors, sheriffs and more were being elected to 700 public offices across the United States, among them two United States Senators and 14 members of the U.S. House of Representatives.

In the Compromise of 1877, U.S. President Rutherford B. Hayes ordered the last troops in the South to withdraw, removing the enforcement arm for the 13th and 14th Amendments.

Alarmed by the progress of Blacks and capitalizing on the troop removal, white southerners put a plan together to change the laws and take back the power they saw slipping away. The results: voter suppression (poll taxes), the default on the 40 acres and a mule promise and the rise of lynching.

When the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed, there was a surge in African American elected officials. Fast forward to the 21st century: Barack Obama was elected as the 44th President of the United States, and the floodgates burst open electing even more minorities and women to public office. A new transformation was taking place.

A red flag went up in the South that white men were about to lose their power, and either they had to change the game or change the rules. Reflecting on their white ancestors who succeeded at retaining their power after the Civil War



and motivated by the fear of minorities and women gaining more elected positions, a new plan was activated.

First, in 2013 during the Obama presidency, the Supreme Court struck down a key part of the Voting Rights Act, which allowed states to begin changing their voting laws without federal procedural protections in place.

In 2016, Americans elected Donald J. Trump as the leader of the free world and placed him in the White House. In Congress, then-Majority Senate leader Mitch McConnell began stacking the courts with conservative like-minded judges: district court judges, the court of appeals judges, and Supreme Court justices. The Republican Party concentrated on controlling local politics, from school boards to governors’ mansions.

With the death of George Floyd and the worldwide response, a nation in denial opened its eyes to African American inequities and “white privilege.” Non-profit and profit entities established diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs, contributed to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), added minorities and women to boards and much more.

To offset the racial equity movement, a counter-force was needed. So, the seeds of the “Big Lie” were planted in anticipation of a Democratic Party victory in the White House to claim Joe Biden was not elected the rightful president.

With COVID, a window of opportunity opened to reinforce a fundamental principle of the Republican Party promoting small or limited government rejecting mask and vaccine mandates. This is hypocritical considering that Republicans are anti-abortion and want the government to dictate what women can do with their bodies. What a double standard.

Now add to the mix the misconception of critical race theory and the efforts to suppress what really happened in American history to people of color. Their objective is to continue teaching the carefully tailored “HIS-STORY” many of us have been taught for decades, which is the foundation of the double standard that exists in America and the fuel for white privilege.

What is the solution? How do we stop history from repeating itself as we see the writing on the wall? How do we save our fragile democracy?

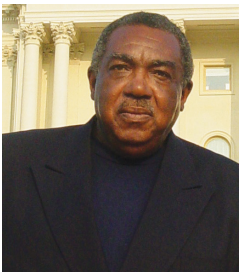
“We the people” must become involved while we still can. We must exercise our right to vote, run for office and let our voice be heard at all public meetings, including school board, city council, county commission, and the state legislature, plus educate our children about our history. We must be diligent despite the obstacles just like our ancestors, who continued the fight under the threat of death.

The reason why we must act now: Our future and the future of our children are in significant danger, and there is too much at stake.

Sonny Messiah Jiles is CEO of the Houston Defender Network. This editorial was written as a part of the Houston Defender Advancing Democracy Initiative. Local Media Foundation, a 501(c)(3) charitable trust that provides support for the Word In Black collaborative, does not endorse political candidates. Word In Black, however, invites and publishes opinion essays, including this one, from the 10 publishers in the collaborative.

Exonerations of Aziz and Islam are No Surprise

By. A. Peter Bailey



(TriceEdneyWire.com) - Serious Malcolmites, including myself, were neither surprised nor shocked by the exonerations of Muhammad Abdul Aziz (known in 1965 as Norman 3X Butler) and Khalil Islam (known as Thomas 15X Johnson) as assassins of Brother Malcolm X on February 21st 1965. Though both were reportedly ardent supporters of the assassination, neither had a position in the Nation Islam needed to plan and execute such a goal.

Shortly after the assassinations that Sunday afternoon, I was told by Brother Earl Grant, one of Brother Malcolm’s most perceptive and trusted aides, that there was no way Aziz and Islam could have been present at the Organization of African American Unity rally without being recognized and probably asked to leave by the organization’s security team.

I personally had practically no knowledge about security so I listened to Earl who was a mentor to me, second only to Brother Malcolm. He also informed me about the lies and misinformation about the assassination coming from the FBI and the New York City Police Department.

What Earl told me at that time was lastingly reinforced in 1993 in a must-read book, “Conspiracies: Unraveling the Assassination of Malcolm X,” written by Baba Zak A. Kondo. His incisive introduction includes the following:

By March 3 (1965) three Black men, Talmadge Hayer, Norman 3X Butler and Thomas 15X Johnson, were in police custody, charged with the first-degree murder of Malcolm X. Hayer was seized by police at the scene of the crime. Both Johnson and Butler were arrested at their homes.

A year and two months later each man was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment. Since Johnson and Butler were both well-known in the Nation Islam’s Harlem Mosque, the police and prosecutors attribut-

ed Malcolm’s death to the escalating feud between Malcolm and his former mentor, Elijah Muhammad. Thus, the assassination, so far as authorities were concerned, was an open and shut case....

The author contends that Malcolm’s murder resulted from three intertwined conspiracies. The first was orchestrated by FBI agents who employed various schemes to oust Malcolm from the Nation of Islam, provoke a war between him and the NOI and set up his murder. The second conspiracy—fed by the first—was orchestrated by the NOI hierarchy which authorized New Jersey Muslims to plan and execute the murder. The third was orchestrated by the New York Police Department which compromised Malcolm’s security, permitted all but one of the assassins to escape and framed two innocent men.

With clarity and knowledge-expanding details, Baba Zak backs up his analysis in his book. He explains and documents more conclusively than anyone else the whys and hows around the assassination of Brother Malcolm, especially the role of the FBI. It’s

intense hostility and concerns about Brother Malcolm’s international agenda clearly played a role in their desire for him not being around.

One example of their intense hatred of Brother Malcolm is clearly revealed in the following statements from its Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) files. One of its aims was to “Prevent the rise of a ‘messiah’ who could unify and electrify the militant Black nationalist movement. Malcolm might have been such a ‘messiah.’ He is the martyr of the movement today....”

The FBI by saying Brother Malcolm “might have been such a messiah” is understating their concern. They knew very well that he could unify and electrify the militant Black nationalist movement. That’s why they wanted him eliminated.

Aziz and Islam were not in a position to help carry out the plans of the FBI and its collaborators. I predict that twenty years from now their exonerations will be taught in high schools and colleges as shiny examples of the greatness of the American “justice” system.

OUR VOICES

Justice Was Not Done Today

By Lawrence Ware



(TheRoot.com) - Julius Jones, a man who has been on death row for almost 20 years and has always maintained his innocence, was granted clemency by the Governor of the State of Oklahoma, Kevin Stitt.

That's the good news.

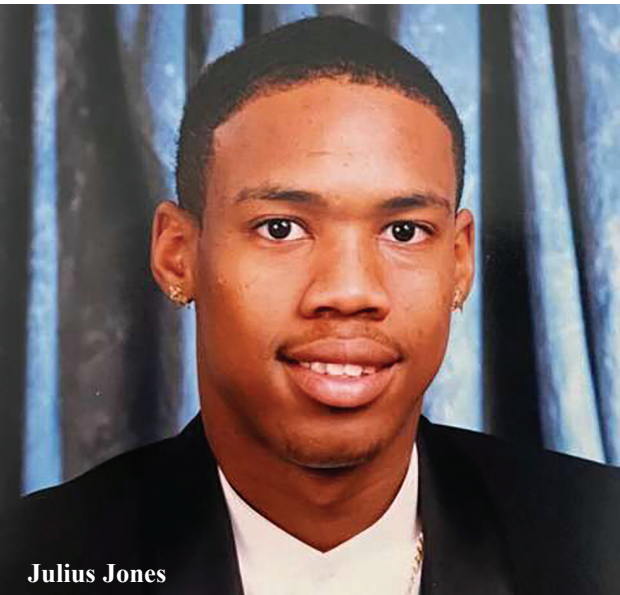
I am happy that the government will not kill another Black man today. I am overjoyed that his mother will see him again. I applaud the tireless work of Cece Jones-Davis and others who have had a hand in bringing this to pass.

But today was not a win.

Kevin Stitt did not listen to his Pardon and Parole Board who voted 3-1 to recommend that Jones' death sentence be commuted to life in prison with the possibility of parole. Instead, he allowed Jones to sit on death row, contemplating his impending doom, and then, when there were only four hours left, made the decision to commute his sentence to life without the possibility of parole with the following stipulation:

As a condition of granting clemency, Stitt ordered that Jones shall never be eligible to apply for or be considered for a commutation, pardon, or parole for the rest of his life.

I am not given to hyperbole. I am not careless with my words. I will not call the Governor evil or a coward as



Julius Jones

I have seen many do on social media. But I will say this unequivocally: The United States criminal justice system is evil.

I live in Oklahoma, the state that almost put this man to death. I look outside my window, and I see people rejoicing in the streets. There are tearful hugs being exchanged by student on the campus of Oklahoma State University. A football player who is in one of my classes just emailed me to tell me that the athletes cheered as the news of Jones's commutation came down. This made me happy—that others are full of joy about this news, but I am not happy. This is not a day of rejoicing for me.

Am I wrong to expect a man who I believe to be innocent to be given the possibility that he could one day be released? Is it unreasonable to not see this as a win, but, rath-

er, as side-stepping disaster? I am not happy. I do not feel cheerful. Yes, we did not put an innocent man to death, but the fact that we almost did should give everyone pause.

The fact that Julius Jones is almost certainly innocent has been well documented. The Innocence Project does not take up the case of everyone who applies. They are very, very careful who they put their names behind...and they have been on the side of Jones for years.

Why?

Because there is overwhelming evidence that says Jones should, minimally, not be on death row. But if we are being honest, this man should be given the possibility of parole—but he was not. He was told that he, a man who is most likely innocent, must spend the rest of his life in jail.

No, I am not happy. I do not feel jubilant.

I am tired of Black men and women being overly represented in prison populations. I am angered that there is debate about the guilt of Kyle Rittenhouse while we are forced to celebrate the fact that Julius Jones was not killed, yet his life is still, largely, destroyed. How can I rejoice while Travis McMichael and Gregory McMichael, the men who killed Ahmaud Arbery, are on trial in Georgia before a mostly all white jury?

Justice was not done today. I wonder if those of us who have been kissed by the sun will ever truly know justice in this country.

Lawrence Ware is Teaching Assistant Professor and Diversity Liaison in the Department of Philosophy at Oklahoma State University. He is a contributing writer to Slate Magazine, The New York Times and The Root. He has been a commentator on race and politics for the Huffington Post Live, NPR, and TV One. Lawrence has taught and lectured across the country on issues ranging from race to economic policy.

Being Woke Means...

By Dr. E. Faye Williams

(TriceEdneyWire.com) – Generally, there is great appreciation for someone who can control the narrative. That person who is skilled enough to master an honest and truthful round of discussion, discourse, or dialogue is often rewarded with sincere admiration.

Conversely, he or she who resorts to dishonest use of facts is held in disdain by the honest dealer. Such is the case with those who hijack, distort, and reframe the meaning and significance of generally accepted “labels.” The current controversy regarding the words “Woke” or “Wokeness” exemplifies the shameful attempt of political reactionaries to apply a negative connotation to our increased awareness.

I refuse to accept this hijacking. As a Black person who has experienced and continues to live through the indignities commonly suffered by Black people, I REFUSE! As a Black person who, by accident or intent, is subject to on-going disparate treatment and consideration, I REFUSE! As one who worked with and observed my friend, Dick Gregory, bludgeon “dishonest dealers” with the truth of the negative impact of their attitudes and actions, I CONTINUE TO REFUSE!!

Those of us living a more progressive life know the pitfalls of allowing our wokeness to be distorted into something evil and unacceptable. We have watched the term “Liberal” stolen and reshaped into an objectionable characterization. We have allowed the term “Diversity” to become perverted into an imposition upon the emotional comfort of those who would continue to oppress us or ignore the existence of institutional discrimination and oppression.

Accepting the bastardization of these terms, we have also accepted that the use of these terms in the justification of positive change distorts that change into something offen-

sive and unacceptable. By allowing the reframing of these terms we have contributed to the shameful suffering we experience.

We know what “Wake Up and Stay Woke” means. Being “Woke” is indicative of accepting that time is long overdue for meaningful and constructive change in the lives of those who have long suffered the application of unjust obstacles to our full participation in the economic prosperity of this nation.

Being “Woke” signifies an ability to critically analyze and actively move to restructure a criminal justice system that allows the environment in which vigilante justice flourishes, as in the cases of the murderers of Ahmaud Arbery and murderer, Kyle Rittenhouse.

Being “Woke” means drawing a line in the sand past which the illegal actions and practices of the police will not be condoned or excused. It means holding law enforcement officers to a standard of conduct that is consistent with the same laws they are directed to enforce. It means ending “qualified immunity” and establishing a national registry in which “bad cops” who have been dismissed for misconduct are listed and denied future opportunities for employment in law enforcement.

Being “Woke” means refusing to be apologetic for merely existing. Unlike the admonitions of James Carville, who practically demands that we quietly hurry up and wait for the full measure of our citizenship, being “Woke” means that there is no greater imperative than complete justice.

Unlike Winsome Sears, the gun-toting woman of color and current Lieutenant Governor-Elect of Virginia, being “Woke” does not mean that we have to imitate our oppressors to survive or realize the American Dream. It means that we no longer have to align ourselves with



those who hold us in contempt for the remote possibility of achievement or acceptance.

Being “Woke” means that we must increase our assertiveness toward the achievement of social and economic goals that will secure our, and our children's future.

As “Woke” folks, we must proudly tell our own stories. As with the African proverb, “Until the lions tell their story, tales of hunting will always glorify the hunter.”

Dr. E. Faye Williams is President of the National Congress of Black Women and host of “Wake Up and Stay Woke” on WPFW-89.3 FM.

Spokane Jazz Orchestra to Perform Music of Nat King Cole for 12/11 Christmas Concert

Featuring Vocalist Horace Alexander Young and Introducing Drummer Quindrey Davis



The Spokane Jazz Orchestra (SJO) will return to the stage for their first live performance in two years on Sat, Dec. 11, 2021 at 7:30pm at The Bing, 901 W. Sprague Ave., Spokane.

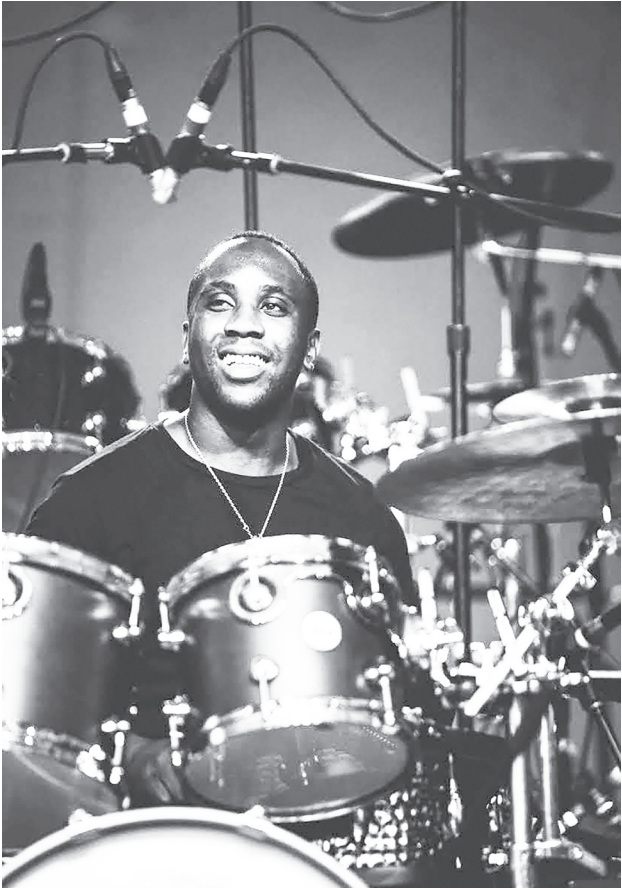
SJO will perform the Christmas music of Nat King Cole, featuring guest vocalist Horace Alexander Young. In addition, the SJO will follow its tradition of including the music of artists such as Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Bill Holman, Buddy Rich, and Maynard Ferguson, as well as original compositions and arrangements by members of the ensemble.

Horace Alexander Young, an associate professor at Washington State University, is an accomplished vocalist, arranger and musician with an active touring and recording career spanning more than three decades. His saxophone, flute and vocal skills have thrilled audiences in 19 countries across five continents at major Jazz festivals. He has performed alongside some of the biggest names in music including B.B. King, The Manhattans, The Temptations, The Four Tops, Anita Baker, Bill Withers and many, many more.

The Dec. 11 concert will also introduce the Spokane Jazz Orchestra’s new drummer and percussionist, Quindrey Davis. Quindrey has been playing the drums for 22 year, playing with Allen Stone, The

Bob Curnow Jazz Orchestra, Karen McCormick and many celebrated artists all over the country. He is also the drum instructor for Bartell Music Academy percussion students and is a ParaEducator for Spokane Public Schools.

For more information about the concert and to purchase tickets, visit: spokanejazz.org/events-1.



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